



Victoria's Hidden Gem: The Victoria Athletic Club

A well-established club gets creative with marketing to boost membership.



BY KEVIN ATTEWELL

Located inside the Hotel Grand Pacific in downtown Victoria, B.C., the Victoria Athletic Club has been serving club members and hotel guests for over 20 years.

In November 2010, the club was forced to close its pool for what turned out to be an almost five-month

renovation. The foundation of the pool needed work and it required the entire pool area to be stripped down to bare concrete and re-tiled.

The pool reopened in mid-March with a significant membership loss due to the long pool renovation period. Though it took some time to regain the lost members, we believe that the closure was in the best interest of the club and our members.

The focus of our marketing strategy has been to increase awareness of our club since people are often surprised to learn that we are much more than just a hotel pool. As part of our push to launch the newly refurbished pool and boost membership numbers, we introduced the club's new name (it was formerly called the Grand Pacific Athletic Club), created a more user-friendly website, have been more

Quick BITS

Victoria Athletic Club

Victoria, B.C.
www.victoriaathleticclub.com

Number of members: 500 regular members and 600 to 800 punch card holders

Number of staff: 3 full time, 2 part time and approximately 15 personal trainers and group exercise instructors

Membership fees: \$895; swim membership \$647

Member demographics: Majority of members are professionals, retired or approaching retirement. Located near the B.C. Legislature, so many members are government workers.

Size: Approximately 12,000 sq. ft., including weight room, squash court, yoga/fitness studio, stretch studio, cardio room, 25-metre pool with sauna, steam room and hot tub

Equipment: SportsArt Green System electricity-generating cardio machines with the EcoFit system; Paramount resistance training machines; free weights; stability tools and yoga props

Programs: Yoga, Pilates, Zumba, aquafit, Bellyfit and cardio/strength classes. Yoga workshops and an on-going natural health lecture series. One-on-one training available for general fitness, yoga, Pilates, swimming and squash.



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actively using social media and have promoted our 12-visit punch cards via radio ads, a radio contest and at local fundraising events.

We have also partnered with Ecofit and Sports Art Cardio Equipment to become a testing and development facility for a new technology that converts members' cardio energy to electricity that is transmitted into our building's power grid. The Ecofit system tallies the electricity members generate and awards points for each watt. Members can track their workout statistics and participate in competitions by logging in to the Ecofit member website. Points earned can be redeemed for discounts and products at the club and at various retail locations around the city.

A second new and exciting club partnership is with the Victoria Royals WHL Hockey Club. As its official athletic club, Royals players and staff members receive complimentary memberships at our club. In return, we attend all hockey home games where we promote our club and services in the main concourse. During game intermissions, we have competitions in the

stands and on the ice where participants win a 12-visit punchcard.

The result of all these marketing techniques has been an immediate growth in club awareness, and we have seen membership sales steadily increase. Today, people often refer to the club as "Victoria's hidden gem," and we are very proud of this.

On a philosophical level, we believe that people are drawn to a top-notch fitness facility that has a positive atmosphere. Our friendly and personable staff knows all of our members by name which gives everyone a strong sense of belonging to a community with a comfortable social aspect. We also have high maintenance standards for our facility. People often comment on the cleanliness of the club.

Along with these two factors, word of mouth and member referrals are our biggest sales drivers. We don't use any form of pressure sales – prospects are toured through the club and given a complimentary visit and the club sells itself! FBC

Kevin Attewell is the athletic club director at the Victoria Athletic Club.

